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Baker-Polito Administration Launches Career Technical Initiative

Program will help eliminate skills gaps in key sectors of the Massachusetts economy while creating more equitable access to middle class jobs for women and communities of color

LAWRENCE – Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Secretary of Education James Peyser, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Mike Kennealy, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Rosalin Acosta, Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera and other local leaders to highlight the Career Technical Initiative, a program aimed at training an additional 20,000 skilled trades workers over the next four years to help close skills gaps and meet the needs of businesses across the Commonwealth. The Baker-Polito Administration will work with school administrators, employers and leaders in cities and towns to provide additional career training opportunities for both young people and adults by operating three teaching shifts a day at vocational schools, and anticipates making a multi-year investment to expand enrollment in vocational schools during the day and build out evening programs for adults seeking skills and certification in high-demand industries.

The Career Technical Initiative aims to provide more Massachusetts residents access to career technical training using the state's existing resources at vocational high schools, while simultaneously helping businesses grow by increasing the population of skilled workers able to be employed in trade and construction jobs. The plan takes a multi-pronged approach to increase student enrollment and includes new state funding to help adults pay for classes, boosts business involvement in program development and credentials, and reduces licensure barriers to incentivize mid-career professionals to become vocational teachers. The new initiative – developed by the Governor's Workforce Skills Cabinet

– has the support of school leaders and industry stakeholders. The Baker-Polito Administration proposed \$15 million in its recently submitted Fiscal Year 21 (FY21) budget to launch this initiative.

“Since taking office in 2015, our administration has been committed to providing the opportunities and resources for students and adult learners throughout the Commonwealth to develop the skills and education necessary to set them on a path to success,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “The Career Technical Initiative represents an essential component in our work to close the achievement gap as we reimagine how to best provide career technical training and encourage employer engagement at all levels.”

“There are many highly-skilled jobs and industries that are growing in the Commonwealth that require the knowledge taught in career technical programs,” **said Lt. Governor Polito**. “We need more young people and adults to take advantage of the educational assets we already have in the Commonwealth and expand them to keep our economy growing.”

Under the plan, vocational schools will run three teaching shifts a day. From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., students enrolled at vocational schools will take classes; from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., students from area high schools will take technical classes at the vocational schools; and from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., the schools will provide training for adults. The administration projects that over the next four years approximately 7,500 to 10,000 more students will be enrolled in high-impact vocational trade programs, which will reduce waitlists in programs at vocational schools around the state. Approximately 9,000 to 13,000 additional adult learners are expected to earn industry credentials, opening opportunities for them to obtain jobs in high-demand skilled industries.

Massachusetts, like the nation, faces a worker shortage and skills gap as the population of young people declines and the number of older people reach retirement age. By 2035, it is predicted that the number of people 65 and older will reach almost 1.7 million, while the number of five to 19-year-olds will hover around 1.2 million, according to the UMass Donahue Institute.

“Career and technical education gives students academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills,” **said Education Secretary James Peyser**. “It helps them see how what they are learning applies to the needs of employers, and prepares students for the future whether they are headed to college or to the workforce.”

“This initiative will create high-quality career pathways in some of the Commonwealth’s largest job growth categories,” **said Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Rosalin Acosta**. “It will help

thousands of women, as well as youth and adults from communities of color, gain access to amazing job opportunities while also helping to fuel real-time employer workforce needs.”

“Retaining skilled workers and ensuring they have a place to live remain significant challenges to the Commonwealth’s strong economy, and this initiative will address workforce shortages and skills gaps by providing pathways to training and well-paying careers for both traditional students and adult learners,” **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy.** “By bringing together the private sector, state and local government, and regional vocational schools, the administration is fostering the partnerships needed to make high-impact vocational trade programs available to more residents, especially those currently underrepresented in these fields.”

Over the past five years, the Baker-Polito Administration, through the Workforce Skills Cabinet, has worked to align education, economic development, and labor and workforce needs by making significant investments and expanding and strengthening education and training programs. Since its inception five years ago, the Workforce Skills Cabinet has awarded more than \$78 million in Skills Capital Grants to high schools, colleges and other educational institutions to purchase new capital equipment. The administration also aligned manufacturing training resources under the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to train more than 1,500 individuals since 2016. Additionally, the Baker-Polito Administration has awarded more than \$10.7 million in Workforce Training Funds to provide additional skills training to 6,769 existing employees working at 119 different businesses, and it has launched early college and early career programs at 60 high schools.

“The Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators is in full support of Governor Baker’s Career Technical Initiative partnering our Vocational Technical Schools with workforce training programs during the evening hours,” **said Kevin Farr, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators.** “Many of the Vocational Technical schools in the Commonwealth currently have active adult and continuing education programs in the evening hours and this funding will provide another opportunity to enable workers to find the training necessary for life changing careers in our very robust economy.”

“The Alliance for Vocational Technical Education is pleased to see this much needed investment in career and technical education for young people and adults,” **said Lew Finfer, co-chair of the Alliance for Vocational Technical Education.** “We hope this initiative will enable more residents to get the training and certifications needed for higher paying, skilled jobs such as technicians, inspectors and mechanics, as well as apprenticeships in the building trades. Opening the voc-tech schools in the afternoons and evenings will allow more high school students to participate as well adults in low wage jobs to advance their skills and careers. “

“By expanding hours of utilization at the vocational schools, more and more workers can attend these classes, obtain marketable construction credentials and be well on their way to a lucrative career in our

industry,” **said Joe Camilo, Vice President and General Manager at Tocco Building Systems and 2020 Chair of Associated Builders and Contractors (ABCMA).**

“With this opportunity, Interstate Electric could continue to add to the ever-growing needs of the company to continue to service the demands of the marketplace, the clients and to further mitigate the skills gap and technological advances,” **said Interstate Electric Founder Pat Alibrandi.**

Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito created the Workforce Skills Cabinet in 2015, bringing together the Secretariats of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Housing and Economic Development in order to align education, economic development and workforce policies, and to strategize around how to meet employers’ demand for skilled workers in each region of the state.

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